

Central Retail District (7th Street to 12th Street)

Introduction

Plans for the Central Retail District recognize this area's long history as the neighborhood's primary shopping destination. The area around the intersection of 8th and H Streets continues to benefit from its position as the corridor's '100% corner'—the place where the transportation network best supports retail activity. Several transportation-related factors—the crossing of high volume bus lines, the passing of 24,000 vehicles per day, and foot traffic from the neighborhood—make this area attractive to a mix of local, regional, and national retailers. Recent building renovations and the low number vacant sites and storefronts are clear signs of the area's viability as a retail destination.

Recommendations for the Central Retail District focus on leveraging existing assets—strong existing businesses, quality building stock, and excellent accessibility. Recommendations include initiatives to increase the competitiveness of existing businesses, attract new investment, encourage the renovation of storefronts and buildings, attract small office and apartment uses in upper story spaces, and encourage infill development on vacant and underused sites. Full-

time on-street parking along with proposed public parking facilities at the district's edges—at the redeveloped Murry's and Auto Zone sites—will help support the district's development.

Development Program

The Plan estimates the Central Retail District can support, over the next 10 years, the following:

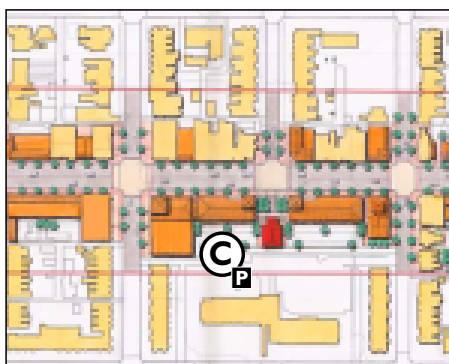
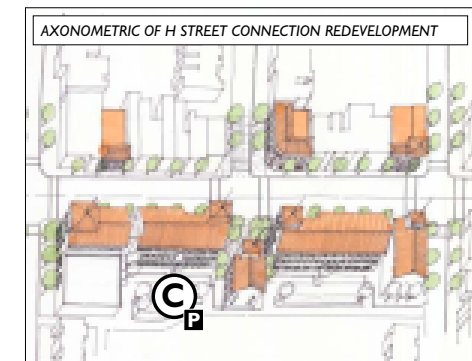
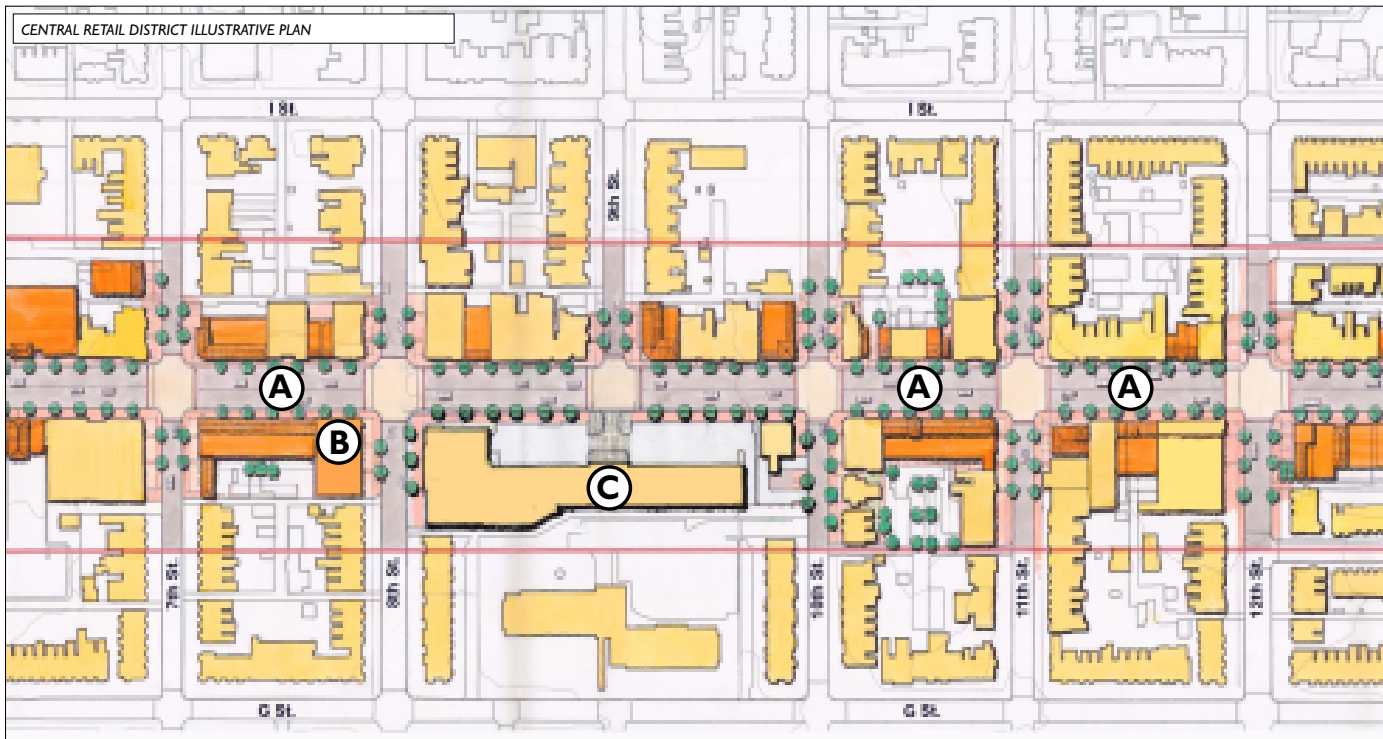
- 120,000 and 200,000 square feet of retail uses;
- 100,000 square feet (or 100 units) of housing; and
- 50,000 square feet of square feet of office space

Accommodating these uses and maximizing the development potential of vacant and underutilized sites will result in the removal of approximately 80,000 square feet of building area and the addition of 180,000 square feet for a total building area of 400,000 square feet. Development in this area will result in the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings and redevelopment resulting in the replacement of several single story buildings with new 3-4 story buildings.

The development program is heavily focused on retail uses. By focusing future retail development in this District, both existing and new merchants will benefit from cross-shopping—customers patronizing another establishment than the focus of their original trip—and the creation of a strong identity for the district. The types of retail that fit into this merchandizing mix would be bakery, dry cleaner, party supplier, tailor, florist, beauty salon, barber, convenience store, deli, newsstand, small family restaurants, coffee shop, and any other type of shop that benefits from a dense, residential clientele of approximately 30,000 people.

Concentrating retail investment and activity is designed to address several key obstacles:

- the isolation of retailers along the H Street corridor;
- the inability of market demand to support retail along the entire corridor; and
- negative perception caused by the proliferation of vacant storefronts.



Recommendations

Preservation, Adaptive Reuse and Infill Development (A). Several sites have been identified as appropriate for small scale redevelopment and infill development. These sites offer opportunities for owners of small vacant and underutilized sites opportunities to contribute to the revitalization effort while maintaining the scale and character of the corridor:

Corner Lots. Corner lots in this district present, especially those with dilapidated structures or single-story buildings, present unique opportunities to enliven the street and create stronger connections between the corridor and the surrounding neighborhood. The wide sidewalks on the side streets present great opportunities for the development of sidewalk cafes, outdoor displays of merchandise, small

garden spaces, and other uses that take advantage of the wide right-of-way.

8th and H Infill (B). Development at 8th and H is currently permitted as a one-story retail building. The design team proposes the addition of a real second-floor – one that could include either office space or a civic use. In any case, it is vital for this location to be occupied by a 2 or 3 story building that properly responds to the corner location. A 1-story building will simply not hold the corner as well as a 2 or 3-story building-

H Street Connection (C). Simple, short-term improvements, such as better landscaping, lighting and signage are recommended to create a better image for the center. To better use the Connection's parking during

evening hours, shared parking agreements between the center and the theaters should be explored.

In the long term, the site's redevelopment is recommended. To maximize the site's development potential and to bring more activity to the street, the Plan recommends replacement of the existing buildings with a more urban, mixed use development composed of 3-4 story buildings with retail on the ground floor; residences and offices in upper story spaces, and rear yard parking or underground parking. The new buildings should be pulled forward to define the street edge. The redevelopment alternative also includes an opportunity for a new civic building and small public square on the center of the site.